UNITED
NATIONS

HRI

International Human Rights Instruments

Distr.
GENERAL

HRI/CORE/1/Add.26
24 June 1993

Original: ENGLISH

CORE DOCUMENT FORMING PART OF THE REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES

ICELAND

[22 April 1993]

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GE.93-17046 (E)

I. Iceland and its people

1. Iceland is an island 103,000 square kilometres in area. About three fourths of the country is over 200 metres in elevation and a large part consists of barren plateau with individual mountains and mountain ranges. Glaciers cover a total of 11,200 square kilometres and cultivated area 1,400 square kilometres. The country is mostly populated along the coasts and the central highlands are uninhabited. The population numbers slightly less than 260,000, of which about 50 per cent reside in the capital city of Reykjavik or its vicinity.

A brief overview of Icelandic history

2. Iceland was settled during the last quarter of the ninth century A.D., mostly from Norway but also from Sweden and Nordic settlements in the British Isles. Probably some Irishmen, including slaves, also were among the settlers, but written sources say little about them.

3. At the time of settlement there was no indigenous population in Iceland. It is possible, however, that some Irish monks were there. The present inhabitants of Iceland are the descendants of the Nordic and Irish settlers. From the twelfth century until the last few decades there was almost no immigration. The nation is consequently rather homogeneous - Caucasian, Icelandic-speaking and overwhelmingly Protestant in religion. People of other racial origins have immigrated to Iceland only during the last 20 to 30 years. In addition, children from all regions of the world have been adopted.

4. It is believed that the first settler came to Iceland in A.D. 874, and that the island was totally settled by about 930. The Althing was established that year where chieftains, the so-called "godar", assembled with their followers. The "godar" were originally 36 in number and 39 later on. Men were free to ally themselves with any "godi" and renounce their allegiance to him if they so chose. Geographical boundaries were not decisive in this respect, at least not until later. The Icelanders therefore enjoyed a form of representative government.

5. At the Althing laws were recited and new laws enacted, legal disputes resolved and judgements rendered. There was, however, no centralized executive power or police authority within the country and consequently each person had to fend for himself with the help of his "godi".

6. Christianity was adopted, peacefully, in 999 or 1000 and the tithe-law was adopted in 1096. The tithe accrued to the church, in some cases indirectly to the lay chieftains, and to the poor.

7. The administrative system of the "godar" enabled one person to accumulate the positions and powers of other "godar". Titles were bought and sold and in this way were concentrated into the hands of a few chieftains, each of whom tried to gain control over the entire country. As central authority was lacking, the chieftains turned to the king of Norway to resolve their disputes and swore their allegiance to him. Eventually, the Icelanders submitted to

the authority of the king under the so-called "Old Pact" concluded in 1264. This was necessary, not only to establish peace but also to ensure communication between Iceland and Europe as the Icelanders no longer possessed seagoing vessels, timber being in short supply.

8. Iceland was under Norwegian rule until 1383 when Danish authority was established in Norway. Iceland remained under Danish rule from that time until the twentieth century. The Reformation took place in 1550, which greatly enhanced royal authority at the expense of the church.

9. In 1662, Iceland came under the absolute monarchy which had been established in Denmark in the seventeenth century. This lasted until 1848. Until the time of absolute monarchy the Althing had retained part of its legislative authority but during the eighteenth century it became solely a judicial body and a forum for proclamations. It was suspended in 1800.

10. The Althing was re-established in 1845 as an advisory body. Soon after that the Icelanders' struggle for independence started. In 1874 the King laid down a constitution concerning matters affecting Iceland, granting the Althing fiscal and legislative powers, subject to royal approval. In 1904 the Icelanders obtained Home Rule under an Icelandic Minister residing in Iceland.

11. Iceland became an independent sovereign State in a personal union with Denmark in 1918. However, Denmark continued to manage Icelandic foreign affairs on Iceland's behalf. A Republic was formally established on 17 June 1944. The entire struggle for independence took place without bloodshed.

Life expectancy

12. Life expectancy in 1989 to 1990 was 75.1 years for men and 80.3 years for women.

Infant mortality

13. Infant mortality in 1990 was 3.3 per 1,000 for boys and 2.1 per 1,000 for girls born.

Fertility

14. Fertility in 1990 was 2.31 children for each woman.

Percentage of population younger than 15 and older than 65

15. In 1990 and 1991, 24.71 per cent of the population was younger than 15 (25.16 per cent of males and 24.26 per cent of females); 10.78 per cent of the population was older than 65 (10.14 per cent of males and 11.99 per cent of females).

Urban and rural population

16. In 1990, 90.7 per cent of the population resided in urban areas and 9.3 per cent in rural areas. An urban area was defined as that having more than 200 inhabitants. In 1991, 91.1 per cent resided in urban areas.

Religion

17. In 1991, 92.2 per cent of the population belonged to the National Church (Evangelic Lutheran); 0.99 per cent were Roman Catholics; 4.2 per cent belonged to other Christian congregations; 1.25 per cent belong to other religious or unspecified denominations; and 1.36 per cent were registered as not belonging to any religious group.

Education

18. Attendance in primary schools is compulsory in Iceland for 10 years for children ages 6 to 16. A large number of students continue studies after compulsory schooling is completed. Non-compulsory secondary education follows primary school and lasts for four years. Primary and secondary education is free. The University of Iceland charges low tuition fees. Students pursuing higher education are entitled to student loans.

II. The economy

Main employment sectors

19. The most important industry is fishing. Sixty per cent of foreign currency income is derived from fish products. The fishing industry accounts for 90 per cent of exports. Agriculture is mainly for domestic needs, and manufacturing is relatively small, slightly exceeding 10 per cent of foreign currency earnings. The importance of services is increasing. Many agricultural and industrial products have to be imported as they cannot be locally produced owing to Iceland's geographical location and its small population.

Mineral and energy resources

20. Iceland is poor in mineral resources. The most important energy sources are geothermal heat and hydroelectric power. Nevertheless, only a small part of the energy has yet been harnessed. The per capita use of geothermal energy is the highest in the world and per capita consumption of electricity is among the world's highest. In 1988, 37 per cent of the energy consumed in Iceland was hydroelectric, 30 per cent geothermal, 30 per cent from petroleum products and 3 per cent from coal.

Per capita gross national product in United States dollars

1980	13,887
1981	14,095
1982	12,496
1983	10,596
1984	10,948
1985	11,348
1986	15,203
1987	21,078
1988	22,758
1989	20,235
1990	22,638
1991	24,322

Foreign debt as a proportion of gross national product

1980	33.1 per cent
1981	34.4 per cent
1982	44.2 per cent
1983	53.3 per cent
1984	54.4 per cent
1985	61.8 per cent
1986	54.5 per cent
1987	47.3 per cent
1988	47.9 per cent
1989	55.0 per cent
1990	55.2 per cent
1991	55.5 per cent

Annual inflation

1980	64.7 per cent
1981	41.1 per cent
1982	63.6 per cent
1983	70.8 per cent
1984	23.1 per cent
1985	34.1 per cent
1986	12.8 per cent
1987	26.1 per cent
1988	18.2 per cent
1989	23.7 per cent
1990	7.3 per cent
1991	7.2 per cent

Unemployment

21. Total unemployment during the period 1980-1990 ranged from 0.3 per cent to 1.7 per cent of the labour force. The percentage has varied between years, but generally has been increasing. Unemployment varies greatly by season, region and employment sector. It increased in 1992 and further increase is

predicted, especially in the light of the great decrease in the fishing catch expected in the next few years. Unemployment in Iceland was registered at about 2.5 per cent of the labour force in 1992.

III. Constitutional structure and government

22. Iceland is a Republic with a parliamentary government. The President of the Republic, the members of the Althing and local governments are elected by popular vote at four-year intervals.

1. The Constitution of the Republic

23. The Constitution of Iceland dates from 1944 when constitutional ties with Denmark were finally severed. Many of its provisions are much older, some of them even from 1874 when the first Constitution was adopted. The provisions concerning economic and civil rights are among the oldest.

24. Opinions vary about whether revision of the Constitution, including the civil rights provisions, is necessary. To date only minor changes have been made, including amendments to the organization and procedures of the Althing and various matters concerning elections. This, however, has not prevented continuous legislative amendments to protect and enhance human rights, especially during the past decade, in keeping with the increased awareness of their importance by the Government and the public.

25. The Constitution of Iceland contains provisions protecting persons under arrest, limiting the application of custody on remand, protecting the inviolability of the home and the right of ownership, freedom of enterprise, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, freedom of association and freedom of assembly. The text of these provisions may be seen in the translation of the Constitution contained in the annex to the present report.

26. Article 2 of the Constitution provides for separation of the three principal branches of government. This is now strictly adhered to as regards the judiciary, but legislative and executive authority may overlap in various fields. Thus, the President of the Republic is formally the head of both the legislative and executive branches. His powers are, however, limited in fact, and his role more resembles that of Kings and Queens in the parliamentary monarchies of Scandinavia than that of elected Heads of State in most other countries. With his signature the President ratifies laws passed by the Althing. He has never exercised his veto which would have the effect of submitting an enactment to a referendum. The Constitution expressly provides that the President entrusts his authority to Ministers and is not responsible for executive acts.

27. The Government Ministers are usually from the ranks of the members of the Althing and remain members of the Althing while serving as Ministers. Important bills are usually submitted by Ministers and drafted on their initiative. Thus, they are involved directly with legislation in many ways.

2. Legislative power

28. The legislative power is jointly vested in the Althing and the President of the Republic according to article 2 of the Constitution. The members of the Althing are 63 in number, popularly elected by secret ballot for a term of four years, representing the country's eight electoral areas. They also serve on various State boards and commissions. The Althing also nominates or elects persons to serve in various positions. Thus, it can be said that the functions of the legislative and executive authorities overlap.

29. Five political parties or groupings were represented in the Althing following elections in 1991. The Independence Party, which is to the right, has 26 members, the Progressive Party, which is a centrist party, is represented by 13 members, and the Social Democratic Party is represented by 10 members. The People's Alliance, a social democratic party which succeeded the Communist Party, is represented by nine members and the Women's List is represented by five members.

3. The executive power

Ministers

30. The Ministers are the heads of executive authority, each in his own field. The Ministries number 14, but the number of Ministers has been lower, generally around 10, and thus some of the Ministers control more than one Ministry. Certain matters are committed to the Prime Minister by law, but in other respects his role is that of leading the Government. All important matters are discussed at cabinet meetings, and State Council meetings are chaired by the President of the Republic to formally conclude matters. The position of the Prime Minister has been influenced somewhat by the fact that, in the history of the Republic, no single party has obtained a majority in the Althing, and consequently coalition Governments usually have been in power. Minority Governments have only been in power for brief periods of time.

Magistrates

31. Magistrates represent the executive authorities at the district level. The Law on the Separation of Judicial and Executive Power at the District Level, No. 92/1989, which took effect on 1 July 1992, significantly changed the roles and functions of magistrates. The changes in question will be further dealt with in paragraphs 40 to 44 describing the judicial system.

32. The country is divided into 27 districts with one magistrate serving in each area. Their functions include administration of police and customs, collection of State revenues, social security services, civil marriages and the issuance of decrees on separation, child custody decisions, maintenance payments, matters concerning majority, real estate recordings, registration of deaths and various acts concerned with estates upon death, enforcement of judgements, forced sales, notarial functions, absentee ballots, registration of firms and various other associations, settlement of certain private law disputes and issue of various licences, together with some involvement in matters of local government.

33. In Reykjavik, the Commissioner of Police, the Commissioner of Customs and the Magistrate are separate offices. In some of the larger towns there are also separate offices, instead of local magistrates, which collect State and government revenues.

34. Disputes concerning the function of a magistrate can be referred directly to the courts in many cases. Otherwise, such disputes are subject to administrative appeal to the Ministry of Justice. This mainly applies to the decisions of magistrates concerning majority and family law.

Criminal investigation and powers of prosecution

35. The State Criminal Investigation Police (SCIP) investigate all criminal cases in the Greater Reykjavik area. They also assist local police commissioners in other areas, if they so request and the Chief of the SCIP or the Director of Public Prosecutions deems this necessary. In practice, the investigation of all complicated or serious criminal cases is always entrusted to the SCIP. At the police departments where the SCIP is in charge of investigations there are departments which investigate traffic accidents and traffic violations and violations of police ordinances and of the Alcoholic Beverages Act (except for those concerning illegal importation of alcoholic beverages). There is also a separate department at the Reykjavik Police Department which investigates drug violations. Tax and customs authorities usually conduct initial investigations of tax and customs violations.

36. Supreme prosecutorial authority is vested in the Director of Public Prosecutions. This power covers all criminal offences except for violation of the Alcoholic Beverage and Traffic Acts where the magistrates and Commissioner of Police in Reykjavik have jurisdiction to sanction by fines, confiscation or imprisonment. The Director of Public Prosecutions supervises the work of other prosecutors.

Local government

37. Icelandic municipalities numbered 197 on 1 October 1992. Their population ranges from a few thousand to tens of thousands. It is the Government's policy to reduce municipalities by consolidation. The division of responsibility between State and local government is determined by law.

4. The judiciary

38. On 1 July 1992 new and comprehensive legislation concerning legal procedure and judicial organization in the lower courts went into effect, entailing fundamental changes compared to previous legislation. In fact, this involved the most radical changes to the Icelandic court system since the times of the monarchy. The essence of these changes is total separation of administrative and judicial powers.

39. Until 1 July 1992 the magistrates outside Reykjavik held both judicial and administrative authority. This meant, inter alia, that the same official dealt with criminal cases as both a commissioner of police and presiding as a

judge and both resolved disputes regarding the legality of State revenues as well as collected them. This system originated under absolute monarchy when all branches of government were united in the hands of the King. The attitude of expediency in the sparsely populated Icelandic society prevented a total separation between judicial and administrative authority from being effected earlier. This arrangement was criticized, however, as totally incompatible with the fundamental requirement of securing judicial impartiality.

40. The Law on the Separation of Judicial and Executive Powers at the District Level No. 92/1989 laid the foundation for a changed judicial system. The law established eight district courts, one in each electoral area of the country. These courts have jurisdiction in civil as well as criminal cases, issue bankruptcy decisions and resolve disputes which arise during magistrates' major proceedings. Judicial authorities also resolve all disputes concerning the extent of administrative powers. After 1 July 1992 district court judges perform only judicial functions. The judicial authority previously wielded by magistrates outside Reykjavik has now been transferred to the new district courts.

41. New legislation covering all aspects of legal procedure followed in the wake of the law on the separation of powers and went into effect also on 1 July 1992. The legislation conformed to the new division of responsibilities for magistrates and courts and repealed a multitude of laws which were, in fact, very outdated. The new laws fall under three headings:

Court procedure;

Settlement of estates;

Enforcement proceedings within the responsibility of magistrates.

42. Of the new enactments particularly referred to in discussing the provisions of the Covenant, the Law on Criminal Procedure No. 19/1991 may be mentioned. Various changes have been made to the older legislation, mainly aiming at the improvement and clarification of the accused's legal position. Criminal procedure has now become accusatory in character, whereas the older code of criminal procedure contained many remnants of the inquisitorial procedures of past times.

43. Judgements of the eight district courts may be appealed to the Supreme Court. The only court of appeals is the Supreme Court which has nationwide jurisdiction. Judgements in criminal cases may be referred to the Supreme Court without any restriction and for appeal of civil judgements there are minor requirements related to the minimum interests at stake.

44. The law on the separation of powers ensures the independence and impartiality of the courts and offers all judges the protection of article 61 of the Constitution against dismissal from office by an administrative authority.

IV. Remedial authority with respect to human rights violations

1. The Courts

45. If an individual believes that his human rights have been violated whether by public authorities or by another individual, he can institute legal proceedings and claim relief before the courts. He can, inter alia, claim compensatory damages, annulment of libelous or slanderous statements, compensation for non-financial loss and invalidation of administrative decisions if he alleges that his rights have been violated by such decisions. In Iceland there is no separate constitutional court which resolves disputes concerning alleged breaches of constitutionally protected human rights.

46. The courts have considered themselves competent to assess whether laws are in agreement with constitutional provisions despite the fact that such power of review is not expressly mentioned in the Constitution. If the courts resolve that a legal provision conflicts with human rights provisions of the Constitution, they will disregard the provision in their judgement. However, the courts do not have authority formally to invalidate laws, even when they are considered to be in conflict with the Constitution.

2. The administrative authorities

47. Various decisions affecting the rights and duties of individuals are taken by administrative authorities. Where such decisions are made at lower administrative levels, for example by a magistrate, or by a committee or a commission responsible to a Ministry, there is generally an avenue of appeal to a Ministry with the power of final review. There are, however, special provisions relating to certain fields, for example in tax cases, where the tax authorities have the power of final review in appeals concerning the amount of tax. These cannot be referred to a superior administrative authority. Disputes concerning tax liability and tax basis can always be referred to the courts.

48. In recent years Icelandic laws have tended to transfer the power of resolution from the Ministries to a lower administrative level. In this way a possibility of appeal from the lower administrative level to the Ministry is open, and the earlier decision can be reviewed and changed if necessary.

49. According to article 60 of the Constitution the courts resolve disputes concerning the extent of administrative authority. Administrative decisions may be referred to the courts for invalidation. Despite the fact that the courts cannot review administrative discretion underlying a decision, they are competent to assess whether an administrative authority proceeded lawfully and whether an administrative decision is based on lawful considerations, e.g. whether the principle of equality within the administrative system has been observed and the parties afforded the opportunity of stating their views. If the procedure employed by an administrative authority was defective the courts may invalidate its decision and order the authority to take a new decision on the basis of lawful considerations.

3. The Ombudsman

50. The office of Ombudsman of the Althing was established in 1988. The Ombudsman is elected by the Althing to which he submits an annual report on his activities. Apart from this, he is an independent official. The role of the Ombudsman is to monitor the administrative functions of the State and the municipalities as an agent of the Althing. One of his duties is to secure the rights of the citizens vis-à-vis administrative authorities. The Ombudsman investigates administrative cases following a complaint or on his own initiative. He is vigilant as to whether laws conflict with the Constitution or are faulty in other respects, including whether they conform to the human rights conventions to which Iceland is a party. He has in his reports called attention to the necessity of revising the human rights provisions of the Constitution. The role of the Ombudsman is described in further detail in the discussion of article 2 of the Covenant.

51. The opinions of the Ombudsman are not binding on administrative authorities, and he cannot invalidate administrative decisions formally. Nevertheless, his opinions carry great weight in calling on the administrative authorities to act according to the opinions, which they do almost without exception.

4. The European Court of Human Rights

52. Iceland is party to the European Convention on Human Rights of 4 November 1950 and has recognized the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. The European Commission on Human Rights, according to article 25 of the Convention, can receive applications or complaints from any individual, private organization or group that Iceland has violated the rights set out in the Convention. According to article 26 of the Convention all domestic remedies must have been exhausted and, for example, all avenues of appeal pursued and a final decision rendered. The Convention and its effects on Icelandic law will be further described in Section E below.

V. International human rights conventions and Icelandic law

1. Conventions to which Iceland is a party

53. Iceland is a party to numerous United Nations human rights instruments. Iceland is also a party to the Council of Europe conventions relating to human rights. Following are the most important instruments:

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, of 9 December 1948;

Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery, of 7 September 1956;

Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, of 20 February 1957;

Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, of 10 December 1962;

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, of 7 March 1966;

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, of 19 December 1966;

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, of 19 December 1966, including the two Optional Protocols;

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, of 18 December 1979;

Various International Labour Organisation Conventions, including the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Rights to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87);

European Social Charter of 18 October 1961;

Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, of 4 November 1950, including Protocols Nos. 1 to 8 - Iceland has recognized the Jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights until 2 September 1994;

Convention 1981 for the Protection of Individuals with Regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data, of 28 January;

European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, of 26 November 1987;

Convention on the Rights of the Child, of 20 November 1989.

2. Implementation of human rights conventions

54. Iceland adheres to the legal doctrine that international treaties do not assume the force of domestic law even if ratified, but rather are only binding according to international law. Human rights conventions have not been incorporated into Icelandic law and consequently they cannot be directly applied by the courts.

55. It is, however, a principle of legal construction that domestic law shall be construed in conformity with international law, but in cases of disagreement domestic law generally takes precedence. It seems, however, that judicial practice of the Supreme Court has changed to some extent during the past few years, giving international instruments added weight. This is mainly the case with regard to the European Convention on Human Rights. The Supreme Court has referred to the Convention in its judgements and thus expressly based its conclusions on those provisions.

56. Icelandic authorities have always considered that domestic law conforms to the conventions they have ratified unless an express reservation has been made to the contrary. For a long time Iceland had an unblemished record with the Court and Commission of Human Rights.

3. European Convention on Human Rights

57. In 1987, the European Commission on Human Rights examined the case of an Icelandic citizen who had been convicted of a traffic violation in district court. On appeal the Supreme Court had upheld the conviction. In accordance with the procedures in effect at the time, his case had been heard and adjudicated by the town magistrate's deputy (on 1 July 1992 the title of town magistrate was abolished, being replaced by the title of magistrate). The deputy was responsible to the town magistrate who was also in charge of the police. An application was lodged with the Commission alleging that the case of the accused had not been heard by an impartial judge in the lower instance, thus violating article 6 of the Convention. The Commission concluded that the case was admissible, thus strongly suggesting that the procedure in question violated the Convention. The same year preparations commenced in Iceland for new legislation intended to change radically the judicial organization. In 1989 the Commission concluded that the judicial organization then in effect violated article 6 of the Convention. The case was referred to the European Court of Human Rights, and, at the end of 1989, a settlement was effected between Iceland and the applicant providing him compensation.

58. In 1990, the Supreme Court decided in a similar case, taking, inter alia, into account the conclusion of the European Commission on Human Rights, that a town magistrate's (police commissioner's) deputy should have withdrawn from a criminal case as lacking competence since he had served both as deputy of the police commissioner and the judge. Immediately after this decision a law was passed appointing special district court judges everywhere in Iceland in order to provide a provisional solution until 1 July 1992 when the new judicial organization would become effective.

59. There is no doubt that the decision to draft changes to legal procedures and the fact that they have now become a reality owe a great deal to the European Convention on Human Rights and the imminent action before the European Court of Human Rights.

60. Applications to the European Commission on Human Rights have increased in number during the past few years. The first judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in a case against Iceland was rendered in June 1992. The Court held that a criminal sentence for allegations against policemen was unnecessary in a democratic society and incompatible with the provision of the Convention concerning freedom of expression. The Minister of Justice immediately appointed a committee to investigate whether the relevant domestic laws had to be changed and whether incorporation of the Convention in its entirety into Icelandic law was advisable. The committee will probably conclude its activities before the end of this year.

61. In July 1992, the Commission decided to refer a case against Iceland concerning freedom of association to the European Court of Human Rights. The Commission concluded that legislation under which licenses for operating a taxi-cab were conditional on membership in a certain trade union violated article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Previously the Supreme Court had ruled that the legislation did not conflict with the Constitution.

4. Information and publications on human rights

62. The Government authorities have not instituted special programmes for the dissemination of information on human rights. It is safe to assume, however, that the public consciousness as regards human rights has been awakened and that interest in human rights has increased in light of the influence of the European Convention on Human Rights. The changes to legal procedures on 1 July 1992 and the extensive media coverage of Icelandic cases recently adjudicated or docketed for hearing by the European Court of Human Rights may be especially mentioned in this context.

63. The European Convention on Human Rights is published in its entirety in Iceland's most recent local law collection from 1990 and has also been printed separately in the form of a booklet available free of charge at the Ministry of Justice. International conventions on human rights ratified by Iceland are published in Division C of Iceland's Law Gazette. All laws are published in Division A of the Law Gazette and most administrative orders such as regulations are published in Division B of the Gazette.

64. Announcements concerning ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights were published in Division C of the Law Gazette No. 10/1979. The entire texts of both Covenants are published there both in Icelandic and English. An announcement concerning the ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was published in Division C of the Law Gazette No. 11/1991. Further publication of the two Covenants has not taken place, nor have their texts been especially introduced to the public such as by distribution to the media.

65. In the discussion of the individual articles of the Covenant, in Part II of the present report, citations will be made to the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and Icelandic law as appropriate. There is no doubt that Icelandic courts interpret Icelandic law in conformity with the European Convention on Human Rights. Recent court rulings demonstrate this clearly.

66. Despite little formalized effort to disseminate information on human rights to the public, Icelanders have always been conscious of certain fields of human rights. Of these women's rights, freedom of expression and the right of ownership deserve special mention. Many people are familiar with the relevant provisions of the Constitution.